

VZCZCXRO0182
PP RUEHDBU
DE RUEHYE #0888/01 1930553
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 120553Z JUL 07
FM AMEMBASSY YEREVAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5938
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 1276
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP WASHDC 0084
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAHINGEN GE//ECJ4/ECJ5-A/ECJ1/ECJ37//
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0387

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000888

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/11/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [HSTC](#) [KTIP](#) [AM](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: NEW CDA CALLS ON DFM KIRAKOSSIAN: RADIO LIBERTY,
TIP, TURKEY, NAGORNO-KARABAKH, AND BILATERAL/SECURITY
RELATIONSHIP DISCUSSED

YEREVAN 00000888 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: CDA Rudolf V. Perina, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Charge d'Affaires met Deputy Foreign Minister Kirakossian for initial GOAM courtesy call, (with FM Oskanian abroad), which then delved into substance. Kirakossian said he and his minister fully agreed with us on Radio Liberty, but urged CDA to raise it at higher levels. Kirakossian was equally receptive on TIP, as his Americas Director detailed the MFA's renewed efforts to improve Armenia's TIP rating. The DFM himself raised the issue of Turkish relations, saying nothing seemed to be happening just now. DCM pointed out Armenia had never replied to Ankara's latest letter, leaving the ball in the GOAM's court. Kirakossian took the message, reiterating familiar objections, but closing by reminding that he had drafted a response letter to the GOT, but his superiors had not (yet) elected to send it. The two discussed the recent Track II delegation visit to Stepanakert, Yerevan, and Baku. Kirakossian credited the long-standing friendship of the Armenian and Azerbaijani Ambassadors in Moscow as the driving force. Neither side seemed interested to build on the visit.
END SUMMARY

12. (C) RENEWING ACQUAINTANCE: CDA, accompanied by DCM and pol/econ chief, paid his first official call with the government on DFM Kirakossian, in the absence of FM Oskanian. Kirakossian received him warmly; the two worked together when Kirakossian was Armenia's Ambassador in Washington and CDA was the Minsk Group negotiator on Nagorno-Karabakh. CDA commented that while he was delighted to be able to spend time in Yerevan and renew old friendships, the circumstances were unfortunate in that they arose from the continuing difficulty in assigning a permanent ambassador to Yerevan. He hoped that it would be possible to resolve this situation in the future. Kirakossian understood the situation, and welcomed CDA to Yerevan in the meantime.

13. (C) RADIO LIBERTY: CDA commented that, though the bilateral relationship seemed very good overall, he was very troubled by Armenian Public Radio's notice to RFE/RL that the state radio service would no longer broadcast Radio Liberty starting next month. CDA acknowledged IBB's outstanding debts to the public radio, but pointed out this problem arose solely from the lack of a valid contract, which the Armenian side had not to date been willing to sign. He said that Armenia's shutting down Radio Liberty would look very bad in Washington -- particularly in light of the upcoming presidential elections -- and would frankly be hard for U.S.

leaders to understand. The inevitable appearance was that Armenia was trying to stifle independent news voices in the country in the pre-election period, and this would be a black eye for Armenia. He solicited Kirakossian's help and advice.

Kirakossian replied that he himself, FM Oskanian, and the whole MFA were very sympathetic to Radio Liberty, and were arguing on Radio Liberty's behalf within the government. Kirakossian urged CDA to be sure to raise our concerns to both the prime minister and the president during his courtesy calls with them. Americas Department Director Armen Yeganian later pulled aside pol/econ chief in the corridor to say that the decision to act against Radio Liberty had come from the presidency.

14. (C) **TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS:** CDA also raised Armenia's TIP rating of Tier Two Watch List, which represented a disappointment for both governments. He said this, too, was a black eye for Armenia's image, and one that should be completely avoidable with a little focused work. He reiterated our readiness to work with the GOAM on this issue.

Kirakossian agreed, and said his ministry was preparing a detailed action plan to submit to the prime minister and cabinet to re-energize Armenia's efforts to combat TIP. Americas Director Yeganian spoke up to describe the detailed report he and his staff had prepared that analyzed the country reports for Armenia (T2WL), Azerbaijan (T2), Turkey (T2), and Georgia (T1), highlighting differences in the three countries' performance which seemed decisive in Armenia's neighbors being graded higher than Armenia. The MFA's package would target efforts to focus action on those areas where Armenia was deficient. (NOTE: Yeganian had previously shared informally with us his Armenian language draft, soliciting our suggestions. It was good work, and seemed to hit all the right areas for action. END NOTE)

15. (C) **TALKING TURKEY:** Kirakossian commented there was no dialogue going on with Turkey at the moment. DCM replied

YEREVAN 00000888 002.2 OF 002

that the Turkish Government considered the ball to be in Armenia's court. Turkey had sent a counter-proposal letter to Armenia, and received no reply. CDA and DCM each affirmed that Armenia should make a point to reply, because the current situation allows Turkey to win the argument on form instead of substance: they can just say "we sent a proposal to Armenia, and are waiting to hear back." Kirakossian reminded us that he drafted a reply letter months ago and sent it up the chain, but his superiors had not been inclined to send it. He reiterated Armenia's party line, which is that Turkey seems determined to defer any dialogue on present-day issues until after resolving the historical question with their commission proposal, while Armenia's focus was on present-day priorities and the desire to open diplomatic relations immediately. He again wondered how Armenia could have an honest dialogue with Turkey about history in the context of Turkey Article 301 criminalization of free discussion on the matter. We shared our frustration at the inability to move the discussion forward.

16. (C) **NAGORNO KARABAKH:** CDA and DFM discussed the recent "intellectuals" delegation, which had dispatched Armenian and Azerbaijani intelligentsia to Stepankert, Yerevan, and Baku, led by the Armenian and Azerbaijani ambassadors to Russia. Kirakossian opined that this trip had come together largely because those two ambassadors had a longstanding "good relationship" of trust and friendship dating back to their common experience as musical composers in the Soviet Union. The two had helped make the delegation trip possible, despite tepid support from their respective presidents and governments. Neither president was enthusiastic but neither had moved to stop it. DCM quipped that maybe each president said "fine" while assuming that the other would surely say no. Kirakossian smiled and did not disagree. Yeganian thought the trip had usefully tested public opinion in the two countries, and observed that there had been protests in Azerbaijan, while Armenians seemed fine with it.

17. (C) BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP: CDA and DFM commented favorably on the overall tenor of U.S.-Armenian relations, highlighting in particular the good work being done through the MCC program. DCM reminded that Armenia must remain eligible on the indicators for the program to continue, implicitly commenting on Radio Liberty and other aspects of Armenia's borderline Ruling Justly scores; the point was taken. Kirakossian said he had noticed that Azerbaijan had just held high-level security talks in Washington, and that this is something Armenia would like to take advantage of as well. DCM noted that traditionally our Bilateral Defense Consultations had often coincided with the U.S.-Armenia Economic Task Force (USATF) meetings in Washington, but that for various reasons there had been no full-fledged USATF since May 2006, though a BDC had recently taken place in Washington, led by General Melkonian of the MOD, without MFA participation. Kirakossian felt the BDC was more of a technical level, and it would be better to have security talks at a political level. CDA noted that this was another reason it was so important to get a permanent U.S. ambassador assigned to Yerevan, who could help coordinate such activities.

PERINA